



Benchers Meeting: Minutes

To: Benchers

Purpose: Approval (Consent Agenda)

Date: Friday, July 4, 2025

Present:

Brook Greenberg, KC, President	Dr. Jan Lindsay
Thomas L. Spraggs, KC 1st Vice-President	Jaspreet Singh Malik
Michael Welsh, KC, 2nd Vice-President	Marcia McNeil
Simran Bains	Jay Michi
Paul Barnett	Georges Rivard, KC
Aleem Bharmal, KC	Michèle Ross
Tanya Chamberlain	Gurminder Sandhu, KC
Jennifer Chow, KC	Nicole E. Smith
Christina J. Cook, KC	Barbara Stanley, KC
Cheryl S. D'Sa, KC	James Struthers
Katrina Harry, KC	Natasha Tony
Ravi R. Hira, KC	Kevin B. Westell
Sasha Hobbs	Gaynor C. Yeung, KC
Benjamin D. Levine	

Absent:

Nikki Charlton, KC	Jonathan Yuen
Tim Delaney	

Staff present:	Avalon Bourne	Doug Munro
	Kim de Bruijn	Rashmi Nair
	Barbara Buchanan, KC	Sara Pavan
	Gigi Chen-Kuo	Ranen Po
	Michaela David	Maryanne Prohl
	Su Forbes, KC	Andrea Rayment
	Kerryn Holt	Michelle Robertson
	Jeffrey Hoskins, KC	Carrie Robinson
	Joyce Johner	Sarah Sharp
	Jane Ladesma	Lesley Small
	Nicolette Lang-Andersen	Arrie Sturdivant
	Michael Lucas, KC	Christine Tam
	Claire Marchant	Maddie Taylor
	Tara McPhail	Adam Whitcombe, KC
	Jeanette McPhee	Charlene Yan
	Melanie Martens	Vinnie Yuen

Guests:	Francis Barragan	President & Chief Executive Officer, CanLII
	Dom Bautista	Executive Director, Courts Center & Executive Director, Amici Curiae Friendship Society
	Cindy Chen	Rule of Law Essay Contest Runner-Up
	Jess Furney	Manager, Policy & Advocacy, Canadian Bar Association, BC Branch
	Wendy Jackson	Chief Executive Officer, Legal Aid BC
	Jamie Maclaren, KC	Executive Director, Access Pro Bono Society of BC
	Desmond MacMillan	Assistant Dean of Law, Thompson Rivers University
	Mark Meredith	Board Member, Mediate BC
	Caroline Nevin	Chief Executive Officer, Courthouse Libraries BC
	Pénélope Roussel	Team Lead, Special Projects, CanLII
	Linda W. Russell	Chief Executive Officer, Continuing Legal Education Society of BC
	Liam Skeoch	Rule of Law Essay Contest Winner

Recognition

1. 2025 Rule of Law Essay Contest: Presentation of Winner and Runner-up

President Brook Greenberg, KC introduced the winner and runner-up of the 2025 Rule of Law Essay Contest. Liam Skeoch is the winner of this year's contest, and Cindy Chen is the runner-up. They both wrote exemplary essays, which will be posted on the Law Society website.

Consent Agenda

2. Minutes of May 31, 2025, meeting (regular session)

The minutes of the meeting held on May 31, 2025 were approved unanimously and by consent as circulated.

3. Minutes of May 31, 2025, meeting (*in camera* session)

The minutes of the *in camera* meeting held on May 31, 2025 were approved unanimously and by consent as circulated.

4. 2025 Law Society Scholarship for Graduate Legal Studies

The following resolution was passed unanimously and by consent:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Benchers ratify the recommendation of the Credentials Committee to divide the 2025 Law Society Scholarship for Graduate Studies between Clare Benton and Vanessa Udy.

5. 2025 Law Society Indigenous Scholarship

The following resolution was passed unanimously and by consent:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Benchers ratify the recommendation of the Credentials Committee to divide the 2025 Law Society Indigenous Scholarship between Clarissa Peter and Cely-Rae Street.

Reports

6. President's Report

Mr. Greenberg began his report by announcing the results of the election for the Benchers' nominee for the 2026 Second Vice President. He congratulated Katrina Harry, KC, and thanked all those who put forward their names for consideration.

Mr. Greenberg spoke about the recent call and welcoming ceremonies throughout BC and thanked Benchers for attending and organizing.

Mr. Greenberg welcomed and introduced Francis Barragan, President & Chief Executive Officer, CanLII and Pénélope Roussel, Special Projects Team Lead, CanLII, who then gave a presentation on a number of CanLII projects, including the AI-summarization Project and AI Research Assistant. M^c. Barragan indicated that he would be providing further information to Benchers regarding participation in the beta version of the AI Research Assistant.

7. CEO's Report

Gigi Chen-Kuo, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, began her report by speaking about the Public Legal Education and Information planning project being led by Dr. Catherine Dauvergne.

Ms. Chen-Kuo then provided an update regarding the single legal regulator initiative. She indicated that the Law Society and the Society of Notaries Public of BC had jointly retained Cascadia Partners to develop an operational workplan to support the amalgamation, which would be developed over the next two to three months.

Ms. Chen-Kuo spoke about the recent Bench and Bar Dinner, at which the Law Society Award had been presented to Karen Snowshoe, KC.

Ms. Chen-Kuo concluded her remarks by speaking about the importance of the rule of law and lawyer independence. She informed Benchers that a number of Canadian law societies were interested in pursuing a national education campaign to enhance the public's understanding of the rule of law. The Law Society of Manitoba would be taking the lead on this initiative, and a steering committee of representative law society CEOs, including BC, has been formed; Ms. Chen-Kuo indicated that further information would be provided to Benchers regarding this initiative at a future meeting.

8. Briefing by the Law Society's Member of the Federation Council

Mr. Greenberg provided a brief overview of the written report he provided for Benchers' information, which included an overview of the recent Federation meetings.

Presentation

9. Presentation of Equity Advisor Program

Sarah Sharp, Practice and Equity Advisor presented on the Equity Advisor Program, including background to the program, program purpose and structure, as well as future plans for the program.

Discussion

10. Practice Fee Rebate Program – Pilot Implementation

Mr. Greenberg introduced the item and provided some background regarding the Benchers' decision to approve, in principle, the establishment of a one-year pilot of a practice fee rebate program. He then reviewed the proposed details of the pilot implementation, which were before Benchers for consideration.

Benchers engaged in discussions regarding the proposed pilot implementation, with topic areas including the determination of the eligibility criteria; the importance of gathering data and information through the piloting of this program, as well as determining key performance indicators and outcomes to ensure the program is achieving its objectives; and whether or not applicants should be required to make a declaration as to their financial status.

Mr. Greenberg thanked Benchers for their comments, which would be considered further by staff, and he indicated that this matter would likely be considered further at the September Benchers meeting.

Discussion & Decision

11. Legal Profession Act Amendments: Section 15(1) Exemption Applications

Ms. Chen-Kuo introduced the item regarding the amendments to the *Legal Profession Act*, which came into force with the passage of the *Legal Professions Act*. Ms. Chen-Kuo indicated that sections 311 and 312 of the new *Act* amended the current *Act* to add Division 1.1 to permit a person to apply for an exemption from section 15(1) by submitting to the Executive Director an application in the form established by the Executive Director. She also provided some background information regarding the proposal to implement an exemption process, in alignment with the afore-mentioned amendments.

Benchers discussed the differences between the proposed exemption process and the Innovation Sandbox. Some Benchers were of the view that what was being proposed was very much in the public interest, as it would provide regulatory measures for those providing legal services via the

Innovation Sandbox, which was meant to be temporary, as well as further protections for the public. Some Benchers were of the view that what was being proposed was also in alignment with the Law Society's position regarding the regulation of paralegals and that the proposal enhanced access to legal services.

Ms. Small provided some additional information regarding the Innovation Sandbox process, which is currently in place to provide an opportunity for those not currently authorized to provide legal services to test ideas in a controlled environment that are likely to benefit the public.

Mr. Greenberg indicated that further discussions regarding the draft rules would continue when they come back before the Benchers for consideration.

The following resolution was passed by the majority of Benchers with one abstention:

BE IT RESOLVED that steps be taken to implement the exemption process outlined in Appendix A and that Rules be drafted to bring these provisions into effect, to be brought back to Benchers at a later date for approval.

Update

12. 2025 May Financial Report

Jeanette McPhee, Chief Financial Officer and Senior Director of Trust Regulation provided an update on the financial results and highlights to the end of May 2025. She indicated that the results are positive to budget with some expense savings; however, a number of costs are expected to be incurred later in the year due to timing differences.

Ms. McPhee then provided an overview of forecasted results and noted that a deficit of \$4.6 million was projected compared to a budgeted deficit of \$1.6 million. She indicated that revenue was projected to be about \$800,000 under budget, as practice fee revenue is approximately 2% below budget. Ms. McPhee highlighted a number of factors that were contributing to the projected deficit, including, the impact of interest rates on interest income, additional external counsel fees, litigation costs, single legal regulator transition costs, and external organization funding. She then reviewed the impact of the projected deficit on the Law Society's reserves.

For Information

13. Equity Advisor Program Report

There was no discussion on this item.

14. Bencher Eligibility for Re-election and Reappointment

There was no discussion on this item.

The Benchers then commenced the *in camera* portion of the meeting.

AB
2025-09-10